

The Examiner rejected claims 1-3 and 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Zhang in view of Severson. The independent claims 1 and 6 recite actively reducing the amplitude of the reference signal. Dependent claims 2 and 7 further recite reducing the amplitude with a DC erase signal. The Examiner states that using a DC erase instead of allowing the disk to spin for 15 hours, as cited by Zhang, would be obvious. The Examiner makes this decision without providing any support in the art. The applicant submits that the Examiner must provide some reference that would teach or suggest to utilize a DC erase current to reduce the amplitude in lieu of waiting an extended time period. The applicant submits that the combination of Zhang and Severson lack any suggestion or motivation to actively reduce the amplitude of the reference signal. For this reason the applicant submits that claims 1-3 and 6-8 are patentably distinct from the prior art.

The Examiner rejected claims 4, 5, 9 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Zhang and Severson and in further view of Pressesky. The applicant submits that these claims are allowable for being dependent upon allowable independent claims.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections is requested. Allowance of claims 1-10 at an early date is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,  
IRELL & MANELLA LLP

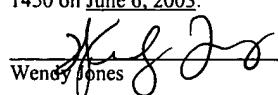
Dated: June 6, 2003

  
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## Appendix

### IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1, 6, 7 and 8 have been amended as follows.

1. (Amended) A test stand for testing a thermal decay of a disk of a hard disk drive, comprising:
  - a spindle motor that can spin the disk;
  - a head coupled to the disk;
  - a heating element that can heat the disk;
  - a controller connected to said head, said controller operates in accordance with a procedure that writes a reference signal onto a reference track of the disk and then actively reduces an amplitude of the reference signal, writes a test signal onto the disk, reads the test signal when the disk is heated by the heating element, reads the reference signal, and normalizes the test signal with the reference signal.

6. (Amended) A method for testing a thermal decay of a disk of a hard disk drive, comprising:
  - writing a reference signal onto a reference track of the disk;
  - writing a test signal onto the disk;
  - actively reducing an amplitude of the reference signal;
  - heating a portion of the disk;
  - reading the test signal from the heated portion of the disk;
  - reading the reference signal; and
  - normalizing the test signal with the reference signal.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the amplitude of the reference[test] signal is reduced with a DC erase signal.

8. (Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the amplitude of the reference[test] signal is reduced 60 to 80% of a peak value.